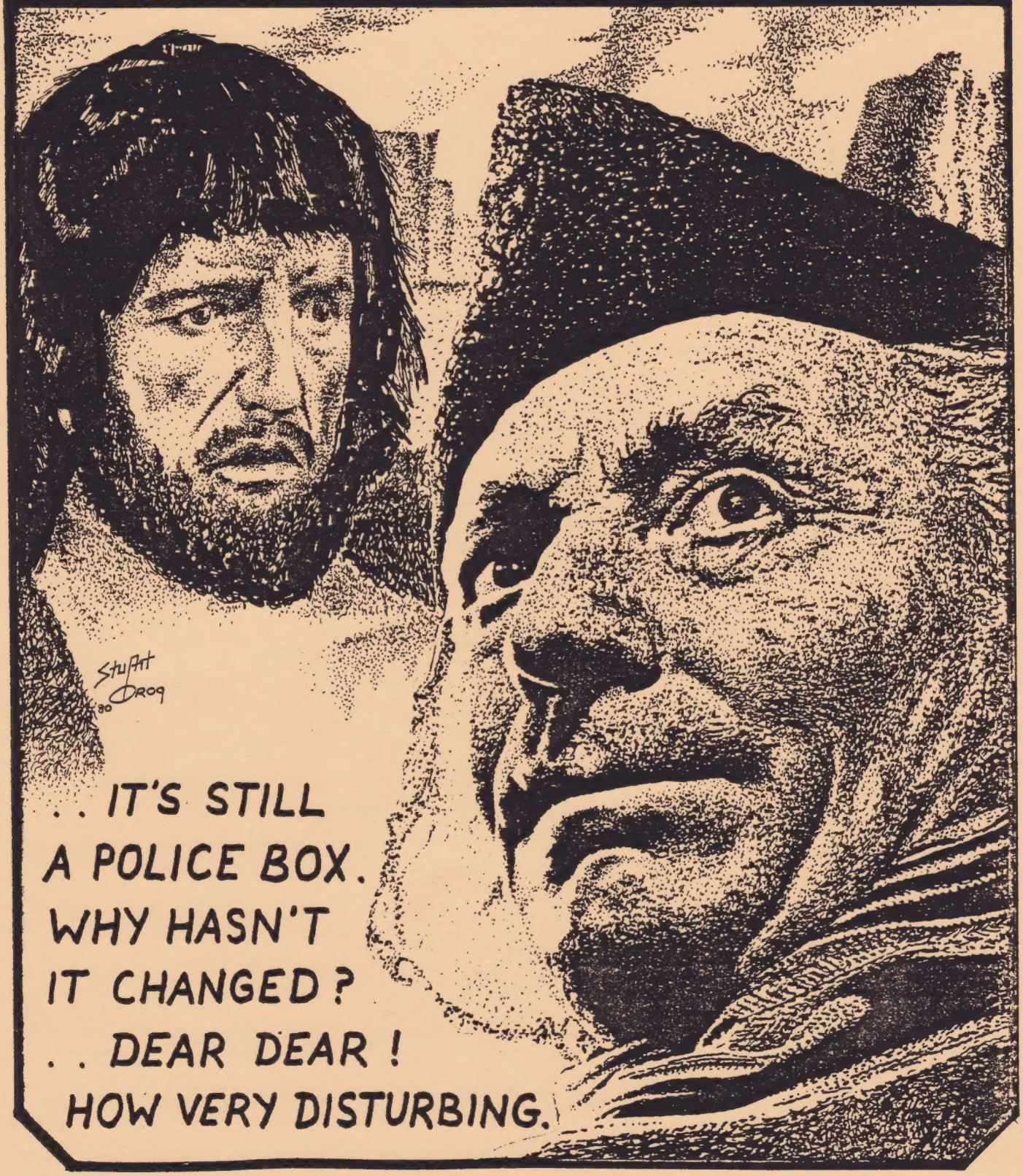
DOCTOR WHO

SERIAL A

THE TRIBE OF GUM

BY ANTHONY COBURN

An Adventure in Space & Time



The Doctor strode purposefully out of the TARDIS.

Barbara followed him, pausing at the threshold to look back at the ship's exterior. "Ian, come out and look!"

Ian willed his bruised muscles into action, dimly aware that Susan was by his side, supporting him in case the earlier fall had caused some concussion. "Well?" Barbara asked quizzically.

"There must be some explanation." Ian knew he was wrong. No longer were they in a junkyard. The stranger had been true to his word. For he and Barbara a fantastic adventure had begun - fantastic, but frightening. He looked at the ship's incongruous shape and shook his head. "Incredible. A police box in the middle of...It doesn't make sense."

Susan frowned. "It's supposed to change... I don't know why it hasn't this time."

"The ship you mean?" asked Barbara.

"Yes," she nodded. "It's been an Ionic column, and once it was a sedan chair."

"Disguising itself wherever it goes?"

"Yes, but it hasn't happened this time." Suddenly Susan's attention was attracted by an object in the sand. Stooping, she pulled up a skull from what had obviously once been a large animal. "I wonder if this old head would help Grandfather. Where's he gone?"

Barbara watched anxiously as Susan ran off, clutching the skull, to find the Doctor. She looked at Ian.

"You're very quiet."

"I was wrong, wasn't I?"

"I don't understand it any more than you do. The inside of the ship, suddenly finding ourselves here, even some of the things Doctor Foreman says are..."

Ian cut her off abruptly. "His name's not Foreman. Who is he? Doctor Who?" ('The Cave of Skulls' - 30th. November 1963)

Story One (part two) "The Tribe of Gum"

The TARDIS materialises on a barren, primeval landscape, observed only by Kal, a caveman. As Ian and Barbara adjust to their strange new environment the Doctor ventures outside to explore. Kal, anxious to discover the secret of fire, and thus make himself ruler of a nearby tribe of cave-dwellers, sees the Doctor lighting a pipe and kidnaps him.

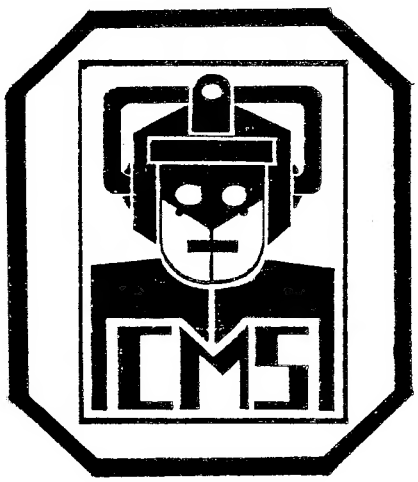
Discovering the Doctor gone Susan and the two school-teachers search the area and trace him to the primitives' cave - the home of the Tribe of Gum. Amongst the members of the tribe a rivalry has developed between its present leader, Za, and Kal. Ian, Barbara and Susan are captured and imprisoned with the Doctor in the sacrificial Cave of Skulls.

Help comes from an unexpected source. The Old Mother, an elder of the tribe, fears the power of fire and wishes its secret to remain lost forever. She frees the Doctor and his companions. Their escape route is, however, far from easy, as they must journey at night through a hostile forest.

Meanwhile, in a fit of anger, Kal has killed the Old Mother and Za is blamed for her murder. Fleeing into the night with the woman, Hur, Za is attacked by a wild animal. His cries are heard by the Doctor and his companions who, much against the Doctor's wishes, want to take Za back to the TARDIS. Their escape proves futile as the tribes-people emerge from hiding to block their path...Once more they are prisoners.

In the final conflict, Za kills Kal. But despite their help the time travellers are forced to remain prisoners. Susan devises an ingenious plan to frighten the superstitious cavemen. She places four skulls upon burning torches, which causes the skulls to glow eerily. Amidst the panic created by this, the travellers finally escape in the TARDIS.

Ian and Barbara's adventures are far from over. As the TARDIS re-materialises, the scanner shows a bizarre jungle. The Doctor decides they should all freshen up after their ordeal during the Stone Age, and they all move away to their quarters. No-one notices the ship's Geiger counter gradually detecting deadly levels of radiation on the surface of the planet...



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Story Review, "The Dawn of Time"

'The Tribe of Gum' was long consigned to a backwater in 'Dr. Who' mythology, being best described as "just a caveman story" by most. Generally overshadowed by 'The Dead Planet' it is, in fact, as unique in itself as any of the Hartnell serials.

The first remarkable thing that impresses one when watching the programme is the sheer, undiluted violence of the story. Kal and Za fight a long hand-to-hand battle which culminates in Za smashing a heavy rock down onto Kal's head with a sickening thud. Kal's corpse is then dragged to one side of the cave and the Doctor and his three companions forced to sit up all night with it. The Doctor too is a more violent character. In "The Forest of Fear" episode he prepares to slay a wounded and bleeding Za, rather than have him taken back to the TARDIS.

An atmosphere of violence, squalor and a grotesque horror pervades the whole story. Dismembered skeletons, burning skulls, rotting animal carcasses. A succession of macabre images masterfully create a realistic picture of life at the dawn of time.

Although 'The Tribe of Gum' can be seen and treated as a self-contained three-part story, one should not forget it is linked with the episode "An Unearthly Child", not only in serial numbering and coding, but also in imagery and theme.

In "An Unearthly Child" Ian and Barbara discover a shop-window dummy in the junkyard. Ian's torch falls upon the mannequin's human face, revealing its head to be split open! A grotesque image, meaningless in itself. Later however, the travellers are horrified to find themselves imprisoned in a sacrificial cave of death, amidst a collection of rotted corpses, the skulls smashed open. Still later, they witness the gruesome destruction of the warrior, Kal, his head smashed to a pulp by a rock. Here the image of the mannequin returns, acting in such a way as to reinforce the horror of Kal's and the victims' fates.

In theme, we see in "An Unearthly Child" Ian and Barbara as two modern-day intelligent humans. Yet to the Doctor they are as primitive savages. Ian and Barbara are unable to understand this until, ironically, the roles are almost reversed. In the prehistoric past it is Ian and Barbara who are the intelligent 'aliens', and the cavemen the primitive savages. Now they find themselves placed in the Doctor's situation.

The various performances by members of the cast in this serial carried such conviction that any flaws in plotting or sets can be overlooked and, in fact, go completely unnoticed. The viewer is hooked from beginning to end. Kal and Za were played with great relish by distinguished character actors Jeremy Young and Derek Newark, their portrayals of the tough cavemen complemented by a fine performance from the late Alethea Charlton as Hur, Eileen Way as Old Mother and the imposing figure of Howard Lang in the role of Horg, the father of Hur. However, our sympathies lie with Za through much of the story, with Derek Newark playing his heart out from beginning to end. He is first seen trying desperately to produce the vital spark of fire...

The quest for fire is also used as a comment upon the nature of progress. Should things remain as they are? It also shows how innovators are often ostracised, not just during the present day, but during the past as well. "My father made fire..." Za mutters.

"They killed him for it," remarks the Old Mother bitterly. "It is better that we live as we have always done."

Old versus new, stagnation versus progress. The argument is ended with a telling observation as Za says: "Without meat, we go hungry...Without fire - we die!"

Waris Hussein's skilful direction of 'The Tribe of Gum' deserves particular mention. Imaginative camera-work, excellent lighting and beautifully atmospheric sets all combined to give the serial a hard, rugged realism untypical of much of television production over the last two decades. Here, remember, the production team were limited in their use of sets, with a total absence of location work. The onus fell to them to utilise the material available to produce the best results. No mean feat, but one which was carried out with an impressive handling of the script (itself a work of art), the actors and actresses and the small, but realistically constructed sets. The chase sequence through the forest was superb, considering it was done entirely in the studios, and highlighted the ingenuity of the production team in making an impressive something out of virtually nothing. In order to give the desired effect, rather than have the actors and actresses running through a forest, they were instructed to run on the spot as the trees and bushes were carried past them...A further touch of realism was added in the appearances of the four travellers; weary, exhausted, sickened, their faces blackened with dirt, their clothes torn and grimy.

This chase sequence was shortly followed by a classic cliff-hanger episode ending. Towards the end of the third episode, the travellers have at last caught sight of the welcome shape of the TARDIS. It is almost within reach as, from various places of concealment, the menacing forms of the cavemen rise to block their path.

One of the most appealing aspects of this serial is its loyalty to the basic idea of the 'Doctor Who' format. The travellers are hurled into a situation of which they have little or no knowledge. Ian and the Doctor have their knowledge of science to guide them, and Barbara has a grasp of history from which she can refer. Yet never are they more fascinating characters than when they have to fight the elements, utilising every instinct, their knowledge proving to be a far more effective weapon than the sharpest sword or the truest bullet. This is demonstrated brilliantly in the final episode. In order to effect an escape from the superstitious primitives, Susan devises a method of using the primitives' fear as their weapon. Four burning torches, surmounted by four skulls, producing an eerie glowing effect and a more than sufficient force against the tribe...

And then, of course, in the final moments of the serial, when all seems well again, the new adventure is all set to begin. Only moments ago, the main concern was how to escape the angered Tribe of Gum, the worshippers of the god 'Orb'...Now, the question forming on everyone's lips was, "I wonder what's out there?" The camera closes in on the view of the forest, a picture of strange trees...Silent... beautiful...dead...!

WRITTEN BY JOHN PEEL

Technical Observations

Although most of 'The Tribe of Gum' was recorded in Studio 'D' at the BBC's Lime Grove studios, the cave sequences were recorded at Ealing studios. The cave of skulls was constructed from expanded polystyrene, a substance thought to be fire retarding. In order to give the cave walls and boulders the correct texture they were subjected to heat, but caught fire in the process. The cave floor was strewn with sawdust, and thus there was a dangerous fire risk during the scenes involving burning skulls, torches and other cave fires, necessitating the move to a safer studio.

To disguise the fact the sets were very small, great use was made of close-ups showing the actors' faces but little of the background.

The TARDIS' Chameleon mechanism was explained for the first time (see 'Dramatic Extract').

The Time Rotor, the transparent column at the centre of the TARDIS' control console, demonstrated its ability to rotate when scanning its environment, as well as move up and down.

The Doctor's character was portrayed in a far more "down to earth" manner. He smoked a pipe (something not done by future portrayals) and exhibited a selfish, almost ruthless attitude; the famous example being the scene where he attempts to murder Za, lying injured on the ground, in order to get back to the TARDIS as quickly as possible. The Doctor also exhibited fear, also unusual, for today's Doctor always seems in control of the situation. In this serial the Doctor was very much one of the victims, doubting that even he could escape the cavemen.

Derek Ware, the first of a team of resident stunt-men to join 'Doctor Who' over the years, acted as 'fight arranger' during 'The Firemaker' episode for the final conflict between Kal and Za.

In the final sequence we saw the TARDIS dematerialise for the first time from the on-looker's point of view, highlighted by the looks of amazement on the cavemens' faces.

Douglas Camfield, who worked as Production Assistant to director Waris Hussein back in 1963, recounts an amusing incident during the recording of 'The Tribe of Gum'. "We were trying to get the feel of the Stone Age, with groups of primitives. Skin-clad, grubby people, huddling in the caves - and this girl, an extra, refused to appear without her false eyelashes! We had to fire her in the end, which made the tribe one female short."

Carole Ann Ford (who played Susan Foreman) also remembers that serial. "I nearly got eaten alive - but not by monsters. A lot of tropical plants had been brought into the studio for the set, and they were full of insects. I had to be fumigated after filming..."

Like many of the William Hartnell serials, 'The Tribe of Gum' did not end with the escape from danger, but continued on, forming a lead-in to the next serial. In this story the TARDIS materialised in its new location, and the scanner showed a dense forest of knotted trees. (This was a model, and not the forest set used in 'The Dead Planet.) The episode then ended with the radiation detector moving, unseen by the travellers, into the 'Danger' zone...

Production Credits

SERIAL "A" FOUR EPISODES BLACK AND WHITE

"AN UNEARTHLY CHILD"	-	23rd. November 1963
"THE CAVE OF SKULLS"	-	30th. November 1963
"THE FOREST OF FEAR"	-	7th. December 1963
"THE FIREMAKER"	-	14th. December 1963

CAST

DOCTOR WHO....WILLIAM HARTNELL
IAN CHESTERTON.WILLIAM RUSSELL
BARBARA WRIGHT.JACQUELINE HILL
SUSAN FOREMAN..CAROLE ANN FORD

KAL.....JEREMY YOUNG
ZA.....DEREK NEWARK
HUR.....ALETHEA CHARLTON
OLD MOTHER.....EILEEN WAY
HORG.....HOWARD LANG
TRIBESMEN.....FRANK WHEATLEY
AL DAVIS, ROY DENTON
BILL NICHOLS, BILLIE DAVIS
LESLIE BATES, BOB HADDOW

TRIBESWOMEN.....JEAN DENYER
MARGOT MAXINE
BRENDA PROCTOR
ELIZABETH BODY
VERONICA DYSON
DIANE GAY, LYN TURNER
DOREEN UBELLS
CHILDREN.....ANTONIA MOSS
DAVID ROSEN
JULIE MOSS
TREVOR THOMAS
ELIZABETH WHITE
JANET FAIRHEAD
TIMOTHY PALMER

CREW

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS.....DOUGLAS CAMFIELD (1, 2, 4)
TONY LIGHTLEY (3)
ASSISTANT FLOOR MANAGER.....CATHERINE CHILDS
FLOOR ASSISTANT.....ROBERT FORT
ASSISTANT.....PEGGY LUPTON
SECRETARY.....MARGARET ALLEN
LIGHTING.....GEOFF SHAW
SOUND.....JACK CLAYTON
VISION MIXER.....CLIVE DOIG
GRAMS OPERATOR.....ADRIAN BISHOP-LAGGETT
COSTUME SUPERVISOR.....MAUREEN HENEGHAN
MAKE-UP SUPERVISOR.....ELIZABETH BLATTNER
INCIDENTAL MUSIC.....NORMAN KAY
STORY EDITOR.....DAVID WHITAKER
DESIGNERS.....PETER BRACHACKI (1)
BARRY NEWBERY (2-4)
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER.....MERVYN PINFIELD
PRODUCER.....VERITY LAMBERT
DIRECTOR.....WARIS HUSSEIN

Compiled by Gary Hopkins